

## Letter and enclosure from Alexander Melville Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, October 10, 1875, with transcript

Home, October 10th, 75. (No envelope) My dear Al.,

It occurs to me to ask: Does not your arrangement with Messrs. Sanders and Hubbard, preclude you from making offers of an assignment of interest in foreign patents to any other party? I think it does. The condition in your letter to Mr. Brown is one that should have been included (as I suggested at the time) in your arrangement with Messrs. S. and H., namely the value of the time you took from your profession to carry on the telegraphic scheme. I feel very doubtful of Mr. Brown's making any such arrangement, and I would advise you not to build any hopes on it. He may take up a perfected scheme, but that is a very different thing from giving a subsidy for experiments. In this transaction hold on to your profession!

Don't relax your attention to it until you have a certainty to take its place. Let me know the tenor of the Toronto reply, as soon as you get it. I shall most likely see Mr. B. tomorrow when I go to lunch with the Lieutenant Governor. I shall let you know what is said if anything.

Hoping to hear of your continued improvement in health and steady use of the means thereto, I am, Your affectionate father, Alex. Melville Bell.

### **SPIRITUALISM AND BUSINESS**

One of the most remarkable civil suits ever tried is now before the courts of Detroit. Briefly stated, the following are the facts of the case:—Captain Ward, one of the wealthiest men and most enterprising and successful speculators of the West, fell down dead last January

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in the streets of Detroit. He had been for some time divorced from his first wife, and had married a second one, who has been by his death left a widow and the legatee of some two million dollars, in nominal value, of property. The will containing this bequest has been contested on the ground that it was drawn up while the captain was under the influence of spiritualists, and at the trial now going on in Detroit some various revelations have been made. Captain Ward was largely engaged in railroad and mining enterprises, and was also a very extensive shipowner. It seems that he was actually in the habit of consulting mediums—or, as spiritualists would say, spirits through them—on business matters, and that in some instances investments of considerable importance were made on their recommendation. It was on the strength of information received through a Mrs. Martin from the spirit of a deceased German geologist, known amongst the initiated by the odd title of “Cabbage John,” that he purchased a share in the Silver Islet mine, of which he became one of the leading spirits. He was at the same time possessed of a controlling snare in a great number of other enterprises equally extensive, by means of which he amassed vast sums of money. The village of Wyandotte, not far from Detroit, was almost entirely of his own creation. Near Milwaukee he owned rolling-mills, employing fifteen hundred men. He possessed silver, lead, and other mines in Arizona, Missouri, Utah, North Carolina, besides furnaces and smelting works. He was at the time of his death president of three different railways, and the owner of three hundred thousand dollars' worth of shipping. In all these lines of business he was accustomed to consult spirits for direction, and act on their advice. He was as prominent politically as he was commercially, and was at one time on the verge of becoming Secretary of the United States Treasury. That a man possessed of such undoubted capacity for business and of so much shrewd common sense as all this implies should have surrendered himself captive to a set of wretched impostors, is one of the most singular instances that have ever occurred of great strength coupled with extraordinary weakness. The explanation given — and it is probably correct—is, that insanity is hereditary in the family to which he belonged, and that during the latter part of his career he was at least partially deranged. No other supposition will suffice to account for the acts of his later years.

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The revelations respecting the immoral life he led, and the domestic infelicity caused by the efforts of his second wife and her relations to secure his property, are matters in which the public will revel, but which are far from being uncommon, much less unique. The manner in which his partner in life contrived to gain her end is of a piece with all that is told of his business habits. Mrs. Kane, a medium, and widow of the late Dr. Kane, the Arctic explorer, produced in Court some documents of her own drafting, containing the substance of the contested will, and dictated to her by two of the second wife's deceased relatives. She further averred that while this was going on the first wife's spirit was in a troubled condition, and manifested her displeasure by exclamations of protest. It is stated that Captain Ward procured his divorce by means of gross fraud, and the plaintiffs' counsel have applied for leave to introduce testimony to prove it. Should permission be granted, still more noisome revelations will ensue, and if they succeed the result will be the invalidation of the second marriage, and the defeat of a well laid and all but successful plot.